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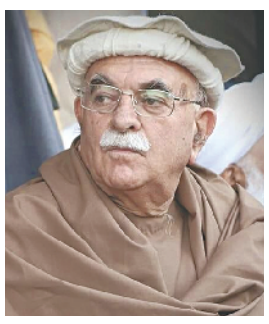
Achakzai finally named opposition leader in NA

- Slot was vacant for almost five months after Omar Ayub's disqualification over May 9 conviction
- PTI leaders congratulate TTAP chief; Gohar says he received notification after long delay
- Predecessor believes Achakzai will 'fulfil his responsibilities brilliantly'

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai was finally appointed leader of the opposition in the National Assembly on Friday — a slot that had been lying vacant for almost five months since the disqualification of PTI's Omar Ayub.

Incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan had named Mr Achakzai, who is also the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) chief, for the opposition leader's slot in the lower house of parliament in August last year.



MEHMOOD Khan Achakzai

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had disqualified both the NA and Senate opposition leaders, Mr Ayub and Shibli Faraz, respectively, in August following their convictions in cases related to the May 9, 2023 riots.

"[The] honourable speaker has been pleased to declare Mr Mehmood Khan Achakzai, member of the National Assembly, as leader of the opposition in the NA, with effect from January 16, 2026," read a notification issued by NA Acting Secretary Saeed Ahmad Maitla.

At long last: Editorial on Page 6

It added that the notification had been issued under "Rule 39 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007".

Prior to the issuance of the notification, NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq summoned PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Chief Whip Amir Dogar to his chambers, stating that he had a "notification to give" them.

The three then proceeded to the speaker's chamber while the acting speaker presided over the lower house session.

After emerging from the speaker's chamber, the PTI chairman announced that the opposition leader had been appointed.

Mr Gohar said the "notification was supposed to be issued yesterday;

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A dyed-in-the-wool opposition leader

PROFILE

By Saleem Shahid in Quetta

OPPOSITION politics are Mehmood Khan Achakzai's bread and butter. The scion of a political legacy steeped in anti-establishment and nationalist politics, he has seen dictators and democratically elected governments come and go, but has invariably always found himself on the opposition benches.

This is perhaps due to his baptism of fire: the young Mehmood Khan was a fresh graduate of UET, Peshawar, when his father, Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, was assassinated in December 1973.

Since Abdul Samad was a sitting MPA

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PRESIDENT Donald Trump holds the Nobel Peace Prize of Venezuelan leader Maria Corina Machado, during their meeting in the Oval Office. According to the White House, Trump intends to keep the prize.—Reuters

Trump gets his wish after Nobel laureate hands over her medal

WASHINGTON: Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado gave her Nobel Peace Prize medal to US President Donald Trump on Thursday during a White House meeting, as she tries to gain some influence over how the president shapes the South American country's political future.

A White House official confirmed that Trump intends to keep the medal.

In a social media post on Thursday evening, Trump wrote: "Maria presented me with her Nobel Peace Prize for the work I have done. Such a wonderful gesture of mutual respect. Thank you Maria!"

Machado, who described the meeting as "excellent", said the gift was in recognition of what she called his commitment to the freedom of the Venezuelan people.

Machado's attempt to sway Trump came after he dismissed the idea of installing her as Venezuela's leader to replace the deposed Nicolas Maduro. Trump openly campaigned for the prize before Machado was awarded it

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PTI leaders want talks but Imran doesn't: Sana

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Friday said PTI leaders were seeking dialogue with the government, but jailed party founder Imran Khan opposed the move, even as the party remained firm on its call for protests on Feb 8.

In December, the PTI had declined to hold dialogue with the government until the provision of a "level-playing field" to the party.

Won't join Fawad's group, says Qureshi: Page 5

Speaking to *Geo News*, Mr Sanaullah said the government had been in contact with PTI leaders for dialogue, stating that "several of them are in favour of negotiations with the government".

"Whenever politicians come to the table for talks, problems get solved and a way gets paved."

Reiterating that many PTI leaders were interested in negotiations, the PM's aide said: "Whenever they meet us, they say that Imran is not in favour of any sort of talks with the government."

He further said the PTI's arrangements, speeches and mobilisation efforts for the upcoming protest on Feb 8 indicated that they were "standing firm on their decision and

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12 terrorists killed after attacks on Kharan police station, banks

- ISPR says forces foil hostage bid; Rs3.4m looted from banks
- Three FC officers injured in clashes
- CM Bugti says militants 'shifted from ideology to criminality'; 'option to surrender' still open

By Our Staff Correspondent

QUETTA: Security forces killed 12 terrorists and effectively thwarted their attempt to create a hostage situation in Balochistan's Kharan district during multiple operations, the military's media wing said in a statement on Friday.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), "approximately 15 to 20 Indian-sponsored terrorists of Fitna Al Hindustan carried out multiple terrorist activities in Kharan city" on Thursday.

The state has designated Balochistan-based terrorist groups as Fitna al Hindustan, as it is believed that India is actively involved in terrorism and destabilisation efforts across Pakistan.

The ISPR said that during the operations, "terrorists attacked the City Police Station, National Bank of Pakistan and Habib Bank Limited" and looted Rs3.4 million from the banks.

CM Afridi wonders who will guarantee peace after Khyber operation: Page 8

"Security forces effectively responded and engaged the terrorists, prompting them to retreat. During the ensuing clearance operation, 12 terrorists were sent to hell in three different engagements," the ISPR said.

"Terrorists' design to create a hostage situation at the police station was also effectively thwarted," it said.

It added that a sanitisation operation is underway in the surrounding areas of Kharan to eliminate any other terrorists.

"A relentless counterterrorism campaign under vision Azm-i-Istehkam (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by the security forces and law enforcement agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country," it said.

Separately, Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, speaking

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159 lawmakers suspended for not declaring assets

JI, BNP-M chiefs, federal and Sindh ministers, sons of Senate chairman among those proceeded against

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday suspended the membership of 159 lawmakers for failing to submit their statements of assets and liabilities by the stipulated deadline.

The suspended members will cease to function as lawmakers with immediate effect until they file the required statements, the ECP said.

Senator Jam Saifullah Khan of the PPP, whose name appeared on the list of suspended lawmakers, however, attended the Senate session on Friday.

Those suspended include 32 members of the National Assembly, nine senators, 50 members of the Punjab Assembly, 33 members of the Sindh Assembly, 28 members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly and seven members of the Balochistan Assembly.

Although the last date for the submission of statements of assets and liabilities of lawmakers, their spouses and dependent children is Dec 31, under a law amended in 2017, a notification for the suspension of members who fail to submit these statements by Jan 15 is to be issued on Jan 16.

On Thursday, the ECP had reminded lawmakers to submit details of their assets and liabilities, including those of their spouses and dependent children, for the financial year 2024–25, warning that failure to do so by Jan 15 would result in suspension.

Among the 32 suspended members of the NA are Syed Ali Musa Gilani and Syed Abdul Qadir Gilani, the sons of incumbent Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, as well as MQM leader Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui.

The name of Sardar Akhtar Mengal, chief of the Balochistan National Party (BNP-M), who had announced his

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Senators for keeping tabs on social media usage by under-18s

- PTI senators slam ban on meetings with Imran
- Law minister says jail superintendent responsible for meetings, denies solitary confinement claim

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Senators on Friday called for keeping tabs on the use of social media platforms by children under 18, with the chair proposing a special committee to develop safeguards in consultation with relevant ministries.

The issue was raised through a calling-attention notice moved by Senators Falak Naz, Fawzia Arshad, Aimal Wali Khan, Saadia Abbasi and Dilawar Khan.

Presiding over the sitting, Senator Sherry Rehman said some checks were needed and suggested forming a special committee comprising representatives of the ministries of information technology, interior, education and law, along with parliamentary parties and provincial governments. She said the final decision would rest with Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gilani.

Speaking on the notice, Senator Naz said most platforms were designed for adults and warned that children's exposure to inappropriate content could make them vulnerable to online harassment, exploitation and dangerous trends.

She referred to last year's killing of Sana Yousaf, a 17-year-old TikToker, and said such incidents

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Business leaders reject power package, seek tariff relief

FPCCI says high electricity rates, taxes lead to closure of 150 textile units in two years

By Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: Leaders of the business community on Friday said expensive electricity and excessive taxation had forced about 150 large textile units to shut down over the past two years, and rejected the government's electricity incentive package.

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) warned that the industrial sector was facing a severe crisis due to high energy tariffs and heavy taxes, leading to factory closures and job losses.

FLANKED by United Business Group's S.M. Tanvir, FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh addresses the media.—Dawn

Speaking at a press conference in Islamabad, FPCCI leaders criticised the government and the Power Division for not passing on to industrial consumers the benefit of a recent reduction in the base electricity tariff determined by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra).

They said the Power Division had maintained the industrial base tariff, citing a high number of domestic consumers receiving subsidised rates.

FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh said costly electricity had crippled industrial activity, particularly in the textile sector. He said around 150 large textile units had shut down during the past two years.

Mr Sheikh urged the government to abolish cross-subsidies imposed on industry and reduce the policy rate to single digits. He proposed cutting interest rates initially to 9 per cent and then to 7pc to revive industrial growth and investment.

The FPCCI appealed to the prime minister to take urgent decisions to save the remaining industry and warned that units that had closed or relocated were unlikely to restart operations in Pakistan.

FPCCI leaders also pointed to surplus electricity in the system, saying capacity charges for unused power were being passed on to consumers.

S.M. Tanvir, patron-in-chief of the United Business Group — which holds a majority in the FPCCI — rejected the electricity incentive package and said the situation had also been highlighted in the World Economic Forum's 2026 report, which he said had increased Pakistan's risk rating.

He said the report showed business activity and employment opportunities were declining, while the small and medium enterprises sector had been reduced to what he described as a "junkyard".

He criticised tax policies, saying non-filers face no scrutiny when depositing money in banks, but are heavily taxed and questioned when investing in real estate. "It appears the Federal Board of Revenue is working to please banks," he alleged.

FPCCI officials warned that if the government failed to urgently address the issue of expensive electricity, the industrial sector could come to a standstill.

They appealed to the prime minister to "remove the industry from the ventilator" and reduce taxes on the export sector to prevent further economic decline.

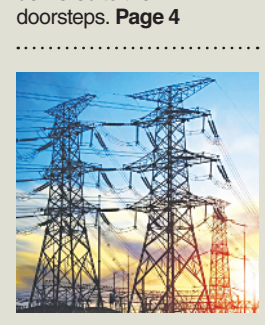
It was highlighted that the industrial tariff was around 12.5 US cents per unit in Pakistan, whereas it was around 7.5 cents in India.

United Business Group Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, in a light remark at the end of the press conference, said it appeared economic stability could also contribute to political stability, as people engaged in jobs and businesses were less likely to be distracted by politics and crime.

ON OTHER PAGES

Sehat card scheme relaunched

PM Shehbaz Sharif on Friday reintroduced the state-run health insurance programme, popularly known as the Sehat Card Programme, in the federal capital, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. Speaking at the launch ceremony of the facility in Islamabad, PM Shehbaz said access to health facilities is the right of every citizen and such facilities should be delivered to their doorsteps. **Page 4**



Discos seek 48-paisa tariff hike

After refusing to pass on a 62-paisa per unit reduction in the base national tariff for the current fiscal, power companies have now sought a 48-paisa per unit increase in fuel cost charges in February bills even though most of the generation in December was from predominantly zero-cost fuel sources. Nepra has called a public hearing on Jan 29 to examine the request. **Page 9**

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